

THE FIVE CIVILIZED TRIBES

Source: The Choctaw Freedmen and The Story of Oak Hill Industrial Academy by Robert Elliott Flickinger

The Choctaw Indians recently occupied lands in the [Pg 8] states bordering on the Gulf of Mexico. In 1820 a considerable part of them, ceding their lands in Georgia, were located on a reservation in the Red River valley west of Arkansas. In 1830 they ceded the remainder of their lands in Alabama and Mississippi and all, together with their slaves, were then transferred to their new reservation in the southeastern part of Indian Territory.

The Chickasaws, who originally occupied the country on the east side of the Mississippi river, as early as 1800 began to migrate up the valley of the Arkansas. In 1805, 1816 and in 1818 they ceded more of their lands and more of them migrated westward, many of them going to the country allotted to the Choctaws. In 1834, when the last of their lands in the Gulf states were ceded, they were located on a reservation south of the Canadian river, west of the Choctaws. These two tribes lived under one tribal government until 1855, when they were granted a political separation.

The Cherokees, previous to 1830, occupied the upper valley of the Tennessee river, extending through the northern parts of Georgia and Alabama. In 1790 a part of the tribe migrated to Louisiana and they rendered important services in the army of Gen. Jackson at New Orleans in the war of 1812.

In 1817 they ceded a part of their native lands for others and the next year 3,000 of them were located in the northwestern part of Arkansas in the valleys of the Arkansas and White rivers. In 1835 the remainder of them were located just west of the first migration in the northeast part of Indian Territory.

The Creek Indians originally lived in the valleys of the Flint, Chattahoochee, Coosa and Alabama rivers and in the [Pg 9] peninsula of Florida. About the year 1875, a part of them moved to Louisiana and later to Texas. In 1836 the remainder of the tribe was transferred to a reservation north of the Canadian river in Indian Territory.

The Seminoles were a nation of Florida Indians, that was composed chiefly of Creeks and the remnants of some other tribes. After the acquisition of Florida from Spain in 1819 many slaves in that section fled from their masters to the Seminoles. The government endeavored to recover them and to force the Seminoles to remove westward. These efforts were not immediately successful, Osceola, their wily and intrepid chief, defeating and capturing four of the generals sent against them, namely, Clinch, Gaines, Call and Winfield Scott. He was finally captured by his captors violating a flag of truce. In 1845 they were induced to move west of the Mississippi and in 1856, they were assigned lands west of the Creeks in the central part of

Indian Territory.

These five tribes, the Choctaws, Chickasaws, Cherokees, Creeks and Seminoles, were the most powerful in numbers. After their settlement in Indian Territory, they made considerable progress in elementary education and agriculture, their farm work being principally done by their slaves previous to the time they were accorded their freedom in 1865. As a result of their progress in the arts of life, during the last half of the last century, these were often called "The Five Civilized Tribes, or Nations."

In 1900 when the last census was taken of them in their tribal form their numbers were as follows: Choctaw nation, 99,681; Chickasaw, 139,260; Cherokee, 101,754; Creek, 40,674; Seminole, 3,786.

The Osage Indians were early driven to the valley of the Arkansas river. They were conveyed to their reservation[Pg 10] west of that river, in the north part of Indian Territory, in 1870. The supplies of oil and other minerals found upon their reservation have caused some of the members of this nation to be reputed as quite wealthy.

Other tribes that were located on small reservations in the northeast part of the Territory were the Modocs, Ottawas, Peorias, Quapaws, Senecas, Shawnees and Wyandottes.

During this early period the Union Indian agency established its headquarters at Muskogee, and it became and continued to be their principal city, during the period of their tribal government.